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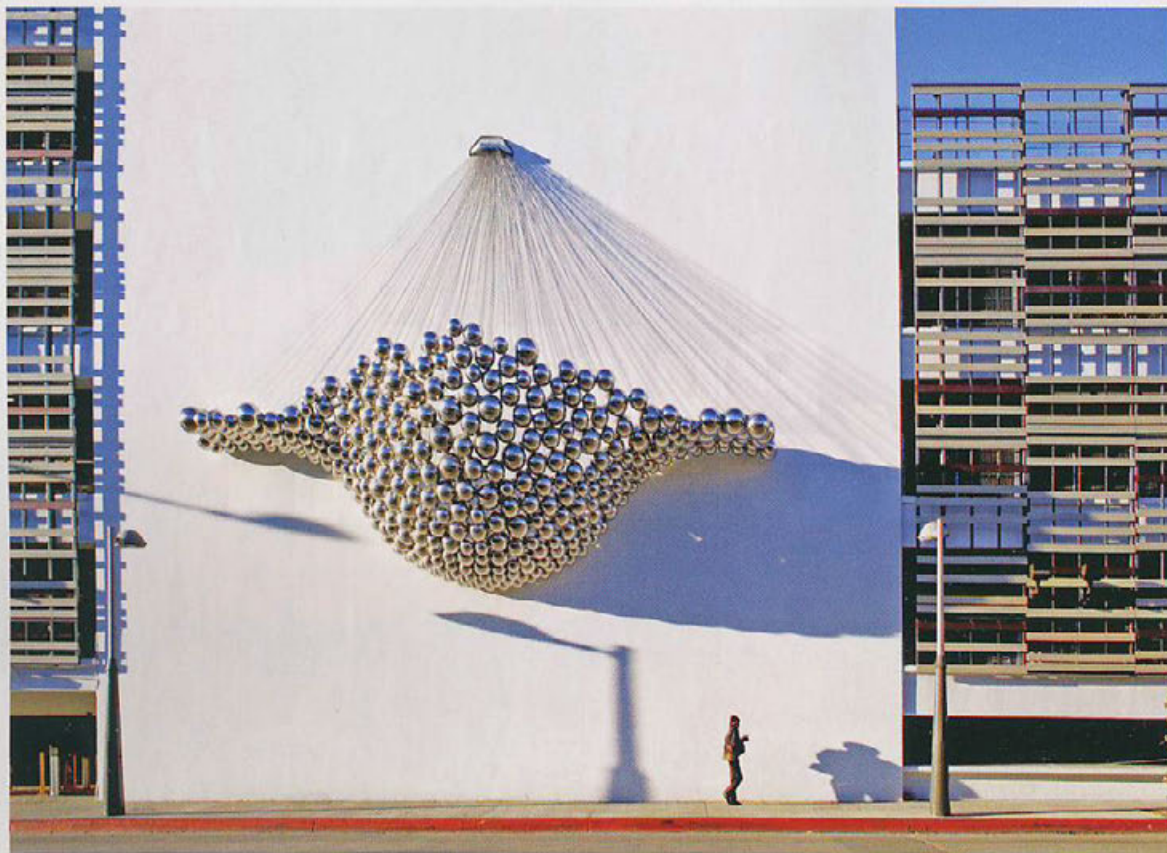
Saturday, 7 p.m.
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CONTINUING EDUCATION

ABOVE THE LOT

Text by Aaron Seward



PARKING GARAGES HAVE RECENTLY GARNERED NEWFOUND DESIGN ACCLAIM, BUT THEIR POTENTIAL TO BECOME CENTERS FOR COMMUNITY GATHERING AND TECHNOLOGICAL TRAILBLAZERS REMAINS OPEN FOR EXPLORATION.

In Santa Monica, Calif., Brooks + Scarpa renovated eight parking garages surrounding the Third Street Promenade, a popular shopping, restaurant, and entertainment district. To improve the pedestrian experience, the firm left large expanses of the façade open for art and cultural installations, including *Cradle* by design and fabrication studio Ball-Nogues.

LARGE, LOOMING, AND DIMLY LIT parking garages are a fact of life in cities and suburbs across the U.S., where the automobile reigns as our favorite mode of personal transportation. Worldwide, the number of vehicles on the roads surpassed 1 billion in 2010, according to WardsAuto Group, and will only continue to increase. Providing space for this burgeoning fleet is an ongoing challenge for communities, particularly as they become denser.

Generally considered the province of engineers and design/build contractors, parking structures have long been a rote sort of project that is often ruled by the mandates of zoning laws, building codes, and the bottom line. Other than physical proximity, they have largely been conceived separately from the buildings that they serve. And that thinking has resulted in the utilitarian steel-and-concrete behemoths that interrupt the flow of the urban fabric with long stretches of

barren-walled sidewalk. "When I started doing parking garages 10 to 15 years ago, when you would tell a story about the structure, folks would say, 'Why even have an architect?'" says George Hibbs, AIA, a principal at Trenton, N.J.-based firm Clarke Caton Hintz. "It seems like an engineering job."

But the parking garage is entering a renaissance. The New Urbanism movement has emphasized walkable environments and multi-modal transit, and the design profession has transitioned from the machinelike efficiency and compartmentalization that underpinned Modernism to more humanistic spaces. Fresh approaches to the typology can be seen in the slew of high-design parking structures that have landed in Miami, designed by the likes of Gehry Partners, Herzog & de Meuron, and Arquitectonica. Parking structures are no longer just a means to multiply the surface parking lot; rather, they



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- LEARNING OBJECTIVES**
1. Identify how parking structures can fit into the New Urbanism movement.
 2. Describe how parking structures have changed over time.
 3. Describe the benefits of integrating parking structures into the urban fabric.
 4. Identify how automation and advances in automobile design will affect the design of parking structures.